

REMARKS

Claims 1-7, 10 and 11 were presented for examination. These claims have been rejected as being obvious over the combination of Reinalda et al. in view of Khare et al. and Wolff-Doring et al. Claims 1, 2 and 10 have been amended to recite that the solids content of the mixture must be from about 65% to about 75% by weight. Claims 5 and 6 have been canceled and claim 6 provides the basis for the amendment of the other claims as well as page 5, lines 23-24, of the specification and Examples 1, 7, 8 and 9.

The Examiner states that Reinalda teaches a process for the preparation of a zirconia-based catalyst wherein zirconia is mixed with a solvent and then mulled wherein the solids content of the mixture is from about 20% to about 60% by weight. This mixture is extruded, dried, and calcined. The Examiner believes that this reference is sufficient to render the claimed invention obvious but even if it does not teach particulate zirconia, the Examiner states that Khare teaches a process for making shaped zirconia particles from zirconia powder. Neither of these references teaches a preference for monoclinic zirconia so the Examiner adds to the combination Wolff-Doring which does teach monoclinic zirconium dioxide having a large surface area for use in catalytic applications including Fischer-Tropsch syntheses.

The Applicants have amended all of the claims to recite that the solids content of the shapable dough mixture is in the preferred range of from about 65% to about 75% by weight. The solids content of the mixture in Example 1 was about 68%. In Example 7, the solids content was about 72%. In Example 8, the solids content was the same as in Example 1 and in Example 9, the solids content was 74.8%. All of these fall within the claimed range. Each of the extrudates made according to Examples 1, 7, 8 and 9 had a high crush strength, i.e., higher than the crush strength of the extrudates of the comparative examples.

The primary reference cited by the Examiner, Reinalda, teaches mulling a mixture wherein the solids content is from 20% by weight to 60% by weight. The Applicants achieve superior results in terms of crush strength by the combination of using monoclinic zirconia and having a solids content of the mixture in the process of from about 65 to about 75% by weight. The combination of the prior art references does not teach this preferred solid content range and therefore does not render the claimed invention obvious.

An early notice of allowance is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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